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SUBJECT: IRAQ EXECUTIVE STEERING COMMITTEE, SEPTEMBER 28

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker A. Butenis for reasons 1.4(b)
and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. On 28 September, Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki chaired the Baghdad Security Plan (Fardh al Qanoon) FAQ) Executive Steering Committee (I-ESC) of the Government of Iraq (GoI). Discussions included Maliki's positive recent trip to the UN; GoI efforts to fight the ongoing cholera epidemic; the need to dramatically improve service delivery in Baghdad and the welcome news that Iraq has made its first oil exports to Jordan since the 2003 invasion. End Summary

PM Maliki Reports Positive US Trip

¶2. (C) PM Maliki opened the meeting by highlighting his recent visit to New York for the UN General Assembly meeting. Maliki noted that his meeting with President Bush was extremely positive and that &all of the countries⁸ are united with Iraq against terrorists, specifically mentioning France and Russia. Maliki also stated that countries like Algeria and Morocco who are suffering from terrorism can learn from Iraqi expertise, and that &it will be an honor for Iraq to be the tip of the spear in the Global War on Terror.⁸

Cholera Epidemic & Chlorine

¶3. (C) The acting Minister of Health (MoH) stated that an educational media hygiene campaign is underway and filters are being distributed to some areas to help combat cholera in Iraq. Noting that cholera is endemic to Iraq due to poor water and sewage infrastructure and that this is the third outbreak in the last 10 years, the MoH stated that there have been 655 confirmed cases and ten deaths in Sulamaniya and roughly and equal number of confirmed cases in Kirkuk. The MoH stated that the number of cases in Kirkuk was high due in part to laboratory contamination and because illegal water companies were cutting and contaminating pipelines.

(Comment. Overall the MoH seemed to indicate that he had the situation well in hand and resisted calls from I-ESC members to utilize mass vaccinations. End Comment).

¶4. (C) The MoH highlighted the need to increase chlorine supplies to the country as a means to help combat the disease and stated that 10,000 tons of chlorine was currently stuck at the Jordanian border. (Comment. Precautions put in place after an increase in terrorist chlorine bomb attacks in early 2007 necessitate the end user of the chlorine, in this case Amanat Baghdad, to travel to the border to secure delivery. End Comment). In response to CG Petraeus circulating a slide showing chlorine supplies across Baghdad's water stations and his offer to assist the GoI in transporting chlorine to the city, PM Maliki instructed the Minister of Defense to take responsibility for immediately transporting the chlorine with the assistance of the MNF-I.

¶ 15. (C) Ambassador Crocker stated that Center for Disease Control and World Health Organizations experts had consulted and that they indicated that mass vaccinations would not be a recommended course of action due to less than 50% effectiveness rates and the negative sense of complacency such action can cause. Crocker emphasized the need for a widespread and truthful media campaign that explains to the public what is the scope of the problem, what the government is doing, and what precautions citizens should take. In response, FaO Civilian Spokesman T. Sheekly stated that several education press conferences would be held in coming weeks to complement the MoH's education campaign.

Vacant Government Buildings

¶ 16. (C) The General Secretary of the Council of Ministers (CoM Sec) gave an update on the effort to refurbish GoI ministerial buildings stating that progress was going well for those building projects already underway, but that an inability to obtain costing estimates was keeping some ministries from starting their projects.

¶ 17. (C) PM Maliki responded with disappointment that more progress on the buildings is not being made and thanked CG Petraeus for his distribution of a GoI building refurbishment tracking progress. In response to a question by DPM Salih about which ministries needed the &most encouragement,⁸ CG Petraeus highlighted the buildings of the Ministry of Planning and Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Trade. (Comment: The information included on the tracking slide was a joint MNF-I / GoI product. The CoM Sec selected the priority buildings and GRD provided the building status. End Comment).

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First Oil Exports to Jordan

¶ 18. (C) PM Maliki stated that 10 lorries of Iraqi crude oil had reached the Jordanian border, marking the first time since the 2003 invasion that Iraq has exported oil to its neighbor.

Focus on GoI Essential Service Delivery

¶ 19. (C) During a discussion about the need to increase public kerosene deliveries in preparation for winter, PM Maliki highlighted the need to improve GoI services across the board and suggested that &2008 will be the Year of Service,⁸ but that such increased effort would begin immediately.

¶ 110. (C) Gen Aboud agreed with the PM that improving services is essential to defeat terrorists and praises the Amanat as cooperating well with the Baghdad Operations Command, specifically mentioning their joint collaboration on a tunnel project in Baghdad.

¶ 111. (C) Amb Crocker stated that recent increases in Baghdad's security had set the stage for the &real battle⁸ which would be the GoI demonstrating that it can equitably meet the needs of its citizens and break the grip of militias. Amb Crocker also praised DPM Salih for beginning discussion on new efforts to increase services and called for a &campaign plan⁸ focused on service improvement.

¶ 112. (C) In response to criticism from Gen Aboud that the Provincial Council was doing nothing to distribute fuel and the Ministry of Oil would need to redouble its efforts in this regard, PM Maliki noted that representatives from neither entity were present and called for a special meeting specifically focused on fuel issues in coming weeks.

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